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(*For the Indicator.*)

There he arriving, round about doth fly,
And takes survey with busie, curious eye,
Now this, now that, he tasteth tenderly.—SPENSER.

THE SPIRIT SEER.

[Continued.]

“ WHEN by a strong mental exertion I became sufficiently calm to enter into something like a study of the varying scene before me, a sudden perception of the theory of my new acquaintance broke in upon my understanding. These are the spiritual influences, thought I, of which Albert is the temporary slave.

“ ‘ That is obvious, Risberg, but what did you make of them.’

“ I have told you that the leading failing of my pupil was a facility at receiving new impressions, and a constant self-abandonment to the most recent. With this predominant caste of character the scene was in perfect accordance.

“ ‘ Cannot you be more particular in your description, Risberg?’

“ I will endeavour Alfman.—On attending more closely to the extraordinary assemblage by which Albert was surrounded, I observed that in proportion as his appearance denoted a recovery from the langour consequent upon a preceding night of dissipation, the airy grouping around him assumed a sort of pictorial interest and unity—the versatile youth himself occupying the foreground, and his attendants arraying themselves, ‘ above, about, and underneath,’ mutably indeed, but according to the laws of the strictest perspective. They were numberless, but I can attend only to the most prominent.

“ Suppose a handsome young man habited in an elegant morning gown, with a moody and melancholy air, carelessly seated in an armed chair; his legs crossed, his head reclining on his hand, and his uppermost foot unconsciously marking time by an undulation like that of a pendulum. Imagine, at the same time, a nondescript being of a severe and contemptuous aspect, whispering into his ear that which, if there be truth in physiognomy, could be nothing but a tissue of stinging reproofs. A tincture of blue, like the bloom on a plumb, was diffused over—

“ ‘ I comprehend you, Risberg—a *blue* devil.’

“ If you will have it so, I have no objection; the countenance of this tenacious sprite was certainly disagreeable, not to say bilious, which with a clothing and costume almost *en capuchin*, rendered it extremely forbidding. But although acid and sombre, the expression of the figure and features was not malevolent.

“ ‘ May be so, yet not the most pleasant guest in the world at a morning levee, Risberg, notwithstanding.’

“ Immediately behind this apparent reprover hovered a pair of very dissimilar shadows. The one shewed an aspect of fierce restlessness, and appeared to yield with reluctance to the ascendancy of the sprite in front, whose predominance seemed to produce a forced acquiescence in a temporary restraint. A low, sly, peering, catlike selfishness glistened in the eye of this disagreeable sprite, in spite of an air of vivacity and *enjouement* which at first sight conveyed a very contrary impression. How different the figure that stood rather before it, which although of the lightest possible texture, was upon the whole exceedingly fascinating. The face displayed I know not what of bland, but indefinite voluptuousness; the eyes alternately melted with languor and sparkled with fire; and an expression of tenderness was diffused over the whole countenance, which would have been exquisite, except that it partook a little too much of the sensual, and bespoke a something of animal self-abandonment. It was, however, a very beautiful piece of incorporeality, and although kept back for a moment by the sombre influence of the spirit in front, it was evident that it was on the point of getting foremost, and possibly would have succeeded, but for the restraining power of a shadow which seemed to operate, in some degree, in accordance with its sombre companion. The features of this latter spirit were cold, but dignified, and its form, which was visible from head to foot, was very stately and imposing. Its most disagreeable expression was that of inflexible hauteur, which it exhibited most forcibly, whenever the insinuating sprite just described seemed likely to press beyond the cynical monitor, which for the present stood foremost. Yet except in this single circumstance, there appeared no alliance with the latter, but, on the contrary, the lofty spirit seemed to yield the *pas* with a portion of sullen and resentful disdain. Further in the rear, but with more or less indistinctness, a variety of shadows were seen flitting in misty evolution, the appearance of which was for the most part graceful and imposing. I was particularly struck with one that seemed eternally intent upon soaring out of sight, and which assumed by turns a martial expression, as if inspired by the sound of a trumpet;—a lofty, ambitious, and saturnine air, as if managing the destinies of millions;—and a rapt and inspired self-engrossment, like a being lost in the regions of thought, or afloat on the gay wings of imagination. Myriads of intelligences still more faint and indefinite remained behind, which to designate by particular description would be impossible, although some of the most faint and remote would now and then unexpectedly dart forward, and shew their features with comparative distinctness. Few of these were absolutely disagreeable; but the most well favoured seemed repressed by the harshness of the temporary leader. Some of them, however, presented lineaments, that if grave, were not disagreeable, although

many of them during their moments of prominence looked extremely capricious and petulant. Upon the whole, the scene was pregnant with significance, and I thought that I began to understand it."

" ' Why, time, place, and circumstance considered, it was tolerably readable ; but proceed :'

" The brown study of my wayward pupil was interrupted by the entrance of his valet, who seemed to announce the approach of some one (for I did not hear as well as see), and now a new object of wonder presented itself. The servant seemed almost as well attended as his master, in respect to distinctive spirituality, although much less so in that which was more vague and indefinite. You must, however, excuse me from any attempt to describe the shadowy train of a fashionable valet, as I have enough to do with that of the master.

" ' Willingly, Risberg. Without being too fastidious, although I can conceive the spiritual attendance of valets and chambermaids to be very busy, intriguing, and amusing nonentities. I fear a particular description of them would too much impede the march of your narrative.'

" I perfectly agree with you, Alfman ; I therefore only mention the fact in justice to the spiritual system, and to illustrate a singular result. No sooner had the servant made his announcement, than a rapid evolution took place in the whole of the phantasmagoria attendant upon Albert. The austere spirit still stood forward, but retreated into comparative obscurity while an unusual fire sparkled in the countenance of the sprite, to whose fascinating, but somewhat equivocal loveliness, I have done so little descriptive justice. Escaping the now faint restraint of its former tyrant, the latter rushed forward with tumultuous vivacity. At the next moment my eyes were offended with the appearance of an individual in the highest degree offensive to me, one of the libertine companions of my pupil, called the Baron Carloststein."

" This man, who assumed the character of an Austrian of a noble but decayed family, had found the means of being introduced to the high-playing circle of the Countess Von F., whose favour he sought by the most assiduous address, which I often suspected was aided by the constant good luck that attended her adventurous gaming when acting under his advice or influence. The card-purse of the vain and haughty countess was however replenished at a dear rate ; for I had received more than one hint that it only enabled this adventurer to mature schemes, which abstracted ten times as much from the reckless spirit of gaming adventure excited in her son. In conformity with my duty, I had exerted myself to convince Albert of the obvious designs of this man, by every means in my power, not omitting some information I had obtained, which rendered his pretensions to rank or nobility extremely doubtful. In some humours, my pupil seemed struck with the intelligence, and half promised to drop him as an intimate friend ; but as I never could positively substantiate my suspicion, to my infinite mortification, his influence always prevailed in the sequel, and that by means I could never altogether understand. Albert gamed, and play was becoming habitual with him, but it had not yet become an all-engrossing pursuit. That Carloststein possessed some other source of ascendancy, I was satisfied, but all my attempts to solve the mystery had hitherto proved vain. In short, this man headed the association which

threatened a total destruction of the hopes of the Von F. family, without any ability on my part to establish the fact, or to make that apparent to them, which was so evident to me.

"When Carlostein appeared to enter the visionary dressing-room of Albert, what an extraordinary scene presented itself!

"Contrary to what I had witnessed, even of the valet, the atmosphere that surrounded him was peculiarly circumscribed; and the forms which hovered about him were limited to half-a-dozen, all of them displaying a physiognomy on which were depicted in different proportions craft, rapacity, and daring. The singularity, in respect to the shadowy attendance on this man, consisted in their comparative steadiness and immovability. When he entered, and with affected cordiality stepped forward to salute Albert, little or no fluctuation took place; and although the more versatile forms around the latter rushed forward, as if to mingle societies and reciprocate, the repulsive principle so philosophically elucidated by Boscovich, seemed to keep them as distinct as oil and water. I wanted no Hungarian to interpret this, Alfman, my suspicion and hatred of the disgusting designer, explained the whole to me."

" 'The state of the case was tolerably obvious certainly.' "

"An earnest conversation appeared to take place between Albert and Carlostein, of which, as I said before, I heard not a word. This mysterious exhibition was intended to instruct me by the eye alone; through which medium, to my infinite surprise, I gathered enough to convince me that mere dissipation and gaming did not so much engross Albert as I had imagined. As the conference proceeded, almost every spirit disappeared but that which seemed to typify the first love of an amorous boy. Monsieur *Bleu* in particular, had utterly absconded, and as my wayward and vacillating pupil listened to the plausible eloquence of his ill chosen Achates, this single spirit alone was visible. At length the conference was interrupted by a hasty summons of his valet on the part of Albert, who proceeded to dress, while Carlostein waited. During this process, I was much amused with the coming and going of a number of the spiritual forms and countenances I had observed in the first instance, which seemed to recur at every interval, only to be chased away by the overpowering fascination of the triumphant sprite, which had been roused into such uncontrollable animation, by the conversation of Carlostein. At length Albert appeared equipped in appropriate costume for the round of morning visits and dissipation, which were so inconsistently allowed to interfere with my authority, and the studies I was nominally appointed to superintend; and without further ceremony, the ill-assorted friends left the room.

"My extraordinary host the Hungarian was no bad machinist: a thickish mist seemed gradually to obscure the dressing-room of Albert, which as suddenly disappeared, and exposed to my wondering gaze the magnificent apartments of the Countess Von F. The Countess appeared reclined on a magnificent Ottoman attended by the young and beautiful Ida Sternheim, her neice, who, seated on a Tabouret by the side of her aunt, to a casual observer, might appear intently occupied with a piece of embroidery, as her cousin Albert, accom-

panied by his friend Carlostein, entered the room to pay his morning respects to his mother; and kiss the hands of his lovely Cousin.

"Here a new scene presented itself: the atmosphere which surrounded the Countess was almost as spiritually barren as that which enveloped Carlostein. At the present moment a horribly disagreeable-looking spirit had perched itself close to her elbow, with yellow visage, half shut eyes, and coarse lethargic features, most ruefully expressive of discontent.

" 'Even I can understand this, Risberg; Madame Von F. had lost the preceding night at cards.'

"I must confess, Alfman, our interpretations agree. I had often seen her ladyship under the influence of this heavy-looking sprite, which in the present instance was almost alone; for I could discover a single companion only, which, with the exception of complexion, might almost have been taken for a spiritual twin. Conceive an aspect of marble rigidity, looking neither to the right nor the left, but lost in apparent self-absorption, without a single trait of sympathy or imagination, and you have the remaining attendant of our spirituelle Countess, whose intellectualities consisted of frequent ennui and eternal self consequence.

" 'But the young lady, Risberg?'

"Aye, there indeed, Alfman. But before I describe the spiritualities of Ida Sternheim, allow me to sketch her as she had previously appeared to my unaided senses. At the time to which my narrative is confined, the fair Ida was about eighteen, having become the ward of the Count Von F. in consequence of the death of a highly-intellectual widowed mother, about a year before. Being an heiress and very rich, the prudent and calculating Count had designed her for his eldest son; but a languid and half-animated young man, who was scarcely ever in health, and otherwise by no means extraordinarily gifted, had utterly failed to interest her, and how could it be otherwise. I am not acquainted, Alfman, with your taste precisely in reference to the earthly celestials vulgarly denominated women, but as far as my observation goes, our suffrages are divided between two classes, one or the other of which, if individualized, forms the beau-ideal of enamoured mortality of the masculine gender. The primary notion which presents itself to the majority, I apprehend, is that of dove-eyed simplicity and yielding gentleness,—all-devoted Griseldas and Nut-brown Maids. My taste lies not that way, Alfman;—not but that, as a "lump of valiant marl," I feel all the beauty of lording it over this exquisite devotedness. There is a majestic simplicity in unity which no man of tasteful mind can resist: *one* idea, and *himself* that one—the notion is attractive in the extreme. But unfortunately, while dove-like eyes and other false lights are eternally to be found, the concomitants are the rarest things imaginable; and it is unpleasant in striving for one port to arrive involuntarily at another. On this account, my good friend, without disparagement to the idea which is so exquisitely taking, and which, aided by a felicitous course of events, has possibly before now been realized on this dim spot called earth, for three months together, I am induced to prefer the open war of an encountering yet ingenuous intellect, to the risk of a masked battery in the guise of unutterable softness and all-yielding sensibility;—a remark

brings me back like a Tassel from the clouds to *terra firma* and Ida Sternheim.

“ ‘ You recollect what Handel exclaimed at the close of a similar flight in the musical way, of an eminent songstress, Risberg?—Welcome home, Madam.

“ The leading characteristic in the mental composition of this beautiful girl, Alfman, was that species of lofty and intellectual frankness, which is seldom found in either sex, but scarcely ever in woman, cramped and swaddled in mind as she usually is by the perverse course of her education. Ida exhibited none of the *minauderie* of her sex and station, and set them aside in others with the most unaffected nonchalance, not always unaided by a considerable portion of arch humour and sportive wit. These manners, so opposed to the heartless formality of the Countess, were often a source of annoyance to the latter; but that passive magic,—to use the pithy defence of Leonora Galigai, in reference to her power over Mary de Medicis—by which strong minds gain an ascendancy over weak ones, prevented any other consequences beyond an occasional lecture on the greater reserve demanded from rank and station. But even with the Countess, Ida Sternheim was a favourite, while her ingenuous nature, and almost enthusiastic benevolence, rendered her the idol of every one else. I often wondered at the seeming insensibility of Albert to the attractions of his beautiful cousin; especially as, setting aside every symptom of love, they appeared on the best terms possible, and never more happy than when engaged in a contest of raillery and pointed *badinage*, at which both were excellent. That nothing more came of it, I always attributed to the known wishes of the Count and Countess in respect to the elder brother, which, by an early interdiction of the notion, might shield the heart of Albert; for very slight armour will frequently preserve hearts, if put on in due time. However this may be, these two young and handsome persons, so every way fitted to inspire a mutual prepossession, laughed, rallied, sported, criticised, and read poetry together, without displaying the slightest symptom of the usual consequences. Masculine twenty-two, and feminine eighteen, a something more than brother and sister, and less than lovers—it was passing strange! But enough by way of introduction to Ida Sternheim: I now proceed to the events of the magical mirror and visionary day.

“ ‘ The episode will pass, but I prefer the main story.’

“ I have already described the shadows in waiting on the Countess; the most prominent of which gave way in a slight degree on the appearance of Carlstein. Let me now attempt a faint description, *couleur de rose*, of the prepossessing appearances which hovered around the attractive form of Ida.

“ ‘ How old were you, Risberg, at this time?’

“ Not thirty, Alfman; but why the question?”

“ ‘ Because the sensibility deficient in Albert seems to have abounded in his tutor; nor does the lady seem essentially different from the Amelia Wildenheim of one Mr. Anhalt.’

“ You long-sighted people frequently deceive yourselves; Ida Sternheim was beloved by every one, and consequently by me; but it was with a pure and intellectual admiration, engendered by the most attractive qualities of mind, and the most generous properties of soul;

—for the *things* are to be distinguished. I must have been utterly insensible not to have loved her in *my* way.

“ ‘ Abelard, in a certain stage of his love affair, I dare say, would have described the sources of his admiration in much the same manner.’

“ A truce with raillery, Alfman, or my story will be too long; and long stories, you know, are to be sustained by “nor Gods, nor men, nor *Columns*.”

“ ‘ There is truth in that remark; so proceed.’

“ There was something extremely beautiful, but at the same time exceedingly mysterious in the spiritual intelligences which surrounded Ida Sternheim. The principal figure which, to my great surprise, seemed excited into extraordinary prominence on the entrance of Albert, was a shadow of a most pure and unearthly appearance, with a something of faded radiance of aspect, and a turn of features from which hope seemed departed, although the eyes shone with peculiar intensity, as if the sepulchral lamp to some fond idea which was buried in the deepest recesses of the soul. Next to this spiritual being stood another of a very feminine appearance and texture, which seemed blushing to reprove the former, and to attempt to check its too forward appearance. A third spirit, which perplexed me far more than the other two, was faint on the first entrance of Albert and Carlostein into the room, but exhibited a most determined existence before they quitted it. This nondescript bore something of the family features of the first of the two former, but gradually put on the appearance of a sternness of determination, mixed up with an indefinite expression of despair. Besides these leading appearances, there was a very attractive array of lighter attendants, who darted backward and forward from complete visibility, into the lightest tintings of air, apparently according to varying feelings of the fair centre of their system. Some of these were of a peculiar arch and vivacious description, and others glittered in form and feature so imaginative and fantastic, it is impossible to convey any notion of them by mere oral description. As the conversation with Albert, in particular, became animated, I observed that groups of the latter would join hands and intermingle in movements the most fanciful, evanescent, and graceful. Yet busy as these minor emanations became, they operated in a very slight degree upon the more fixed and constant attendance of the three presiding spirits, to one or other of which they seemed to pay implicit submission. To crown all, the appearance of the whole was extremely amiable, and with the exception of what I have already remarked, of an expression approaching to sternness in the countenance of one of them; the felicities, the affections, and the graces, seemed mingled in their every movement, and a result of all their combinations.

“ But gifted as I was with the power of perceiving immaterialities, I allowed myself to be aided in the way of interpretation by the more common-place indications which present themselves on the inspection of the usual intercourse of mortals with each other, and unassisted by the spiritual existences, the mere pantomime of this interview was to me as instructive as surprising. In Albert, indeed, I perceived nothing particularly remarkable or novel. His gestures and manners shewed that he reciprocated with his beautiful cousin as

usual—with lively and affectionate familiarity, and I observed that the most important shadow in his spiritual suite, was occasionally somewhat dimmed by the effect of the arch glances and delicate badinage of the lovely Ida. Carlstein, during this intercourse, appeared in earnest conversation with the Countess; but it would have been evident from his sidelong and uneasy glances, that he was annoyed by the familiarity of the cousins, if the tumult amidst his dusky coloured retinue had not put the matter out of doubt. The half closed eyes of the principal figure, dilated and shot forth glances of peculiar malignity. At length he seemingly reminded my pupil of an engagement, an intimation which produced much confusion among the delicate essences which fluttered round Ida, whose sparkling and intelligent eyes shot forth a momentary glance of the strongest disdain; while the spirit, whose determined features had excited in me so much curiosity, seemed suddenly to overshadow with his stronger presence the more fragile attendants which had a few moments before been sporting with indescribable vivacity. Such remained the state of the elemental atmosphere surrounding Ida, for the few minutes occupied in the salutation of leave taking, and the departure of Albert and his evil genius from this their not unusual morning interview.

[*To be concluded in our next*;—in addition to which intimation it may be proper to observe, that although misled by the volatile and unconfined nature of our subject, in the present instance, our future excursions of a similar nature will usually begin and end in the same number.]

GALILEO ON TASSO.

Considerazione al Tasso, di Galileo Galilei. Venezia, 1793.—Observations upon Tasso, by Galileo Galilei.

It has only lately become the fashion for persons of any ability to enter upon the task of criticism. And even now, the remarks of men of talent are seldom written with any other view than to point out the peculiar beauties of a favourite author, or to call the attention of the neglectful public to a light hid behind a bushel, which they would fain draw from its obscurity, and place on high among the stars which rule our literary course. Yet in whatever spirit criticisms on works of taste are written, if they are the work of one capable of understanding the subject, they are always valuable. They at least shew the feeling of the author for the work in question, and the sentiments of a gifted individual on any given subject, is ever an interesting acquisition. Shut up within ourselves, we in vain try to form opinions, whose growth does not spring from the nature of our own minds. But when we discover those of others, who have sufficient individuality to form peculiar ones, we enter upon a new country, with a different soil, and productive of a new series of ideas; we spring at once over the narrow boundaries of our own identity, enter into that of another, and the mind roves with as much delight over thoughts, views, and modes of speech, hitherto strangers to us, as the eye can possibly do over an unknown country, planted by a new species of trees, decorated by a strange vegetation, and watered by streams whose course we cannot guess. It is almost

immaterial whether we agree or not in the opinion expressed, whether we adopt them, or in our turn criticize the critic. We are certain to be improved by the view taken of the subject, and the arguments employed in the support of it. We may read with more pleasure the enlightened praises of one intent upon seeking the beauties of the author before him, but we shall be equally instructed by the severe strictures of one who is solely bent on discovering blemishes. The book now before me is a curious specimen of the latter kind of writing. A criticism of Galileo upon the "Jerusalem Delivered" of Tasso. A *cutting-up* which, save the absence of all personality, is as severe as we find in any of the pages of the *Quarterly*. I believe Tasso is sufficiently known in this country, in the original, or by translation, to make a disquisition on his merits not entirely uninteresting, and the name of Galileo sufficiently respected to excite a desire to know his opinion on the subject. The class of mind in which the faculty of mathematical acquirement is native, is usually extremely exclusive; and those names which have most adorned that science bear in themselves an anti-poetical image as their correlative. At least so it is in these northern countries; but minds may be more happily tempered, under the influence of a climate where the sun, and air, and the happy view of vigorous nature, excite a state of mind more facile of impression, though not less firm of tenure. Galileo loved architecture and painting; he played divinely on the lute; and in the work before us, he shews great justness of taste, and a true feeling for poetry. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Ariosto, and knew by heart almost the whole of the "Orlando Furioso." The "Jerusalem" appeared, and entered into a contest for priority of merit with this poem, and Tasso was by many preferred to his more copious competitor. Galileo was seized with anger; he wrote with all the fervour of a first feeling; spurred on by his admiration for Ariosto, he put no bounds to his contemptuous expressions in unmasking the pretensions of this new sprung rival; he read the entire poem warm and warming with indignation, and as he read he noted on the blank pages with which his volume was interleaved his overflowing disdain, sullenly passing over the beauties of his author, and pouncing with delight on all of tame, turgid, or pedantic, that diminishes the merit of the "Jerusalem." This is not a good spirit; his love for Ariosto must be his excuse; and let us remember, that his was a pure literary zeal, unstained by personal or party feelings.

These "Observations" were written about the year 1590, when Galileo was twenty-six years of age, and had already attained the rank of Professor of Mathematics in the then celebrated University of Pisa. They were afterwards copied by him from the original book (as I have said, an interleaved copy of the "Jerusalem") for the use of a friend, and were subsequently entirely lost, until the Abate Serassi (author of a life of Tasso) found them in a public library, bound up in a volume of miscellanies, but unmarked in the index, and thus withdrawn from all notice. Serassi copied them, but he was too jealous of the honour of Tasso either to shew them to his friends, or to point out the place in which he had found them. He laid them quietly on his shelves, until (as he wrote on the title page of his copy) he should have leisure to be able to reply properly to the sophistical and ill-founded accusations of a critic, who in other matters was of so great celebrity. This leisure

or ability never arrived, and Galileo's "Observations" were condemned to obscurity until the MSS. of Serassi fell into the hands of the Duke of Ceri, who published them, mutilated, as the editor says, by the hand of some zealous *Tassista*.

Galileo is merciless. The conduct of the Epic, the Episodes and the style, are alike judged and alike condemned. The first of these topics is unfortunately fair prey. Supported by his authority, it may not be presumptuous to declare, that Tasso was not only *not* an Epic poet, but incapable of conducting a long poem with dignity and interest; but let me quote from Galileo:—

"It has ever appeared, and it still appears to me," he observes, "that this poet is beyond all expression dull, poor, and miserable in his inventions, and Ariosto, on the contrary, magnificent, rich, and wonderful. When I turn to the consideration of the actions and adventures of the knights, as well as of the other petty fables of this poem, it seems to me just as if I entered into the pitiful study of some curious fellow, who has amused himself by adorning it with things, which, though they may possess a charm from their antiquity or other accidents, are in reality trifles. Having there, for example, a petrified frog, a stuffed animal, a fly, a spider preserved in amber, or a few of those little earthen images which are said to be found in the ancient tombs of Egypt;—or, in the way of painting, some sketch of Baccio Bandinelli, or Parmigiano, or the like. But on the contrary, when I begin the 'Furioso,' I behold a grand repository, or royal gallery thrown open, adorned by an hundred ancient statues, the performance of the greatest sculptors; by the works of the most illustrious painters; or, by a number of vases of chrystal, or agate, or lapislazuli, and other jewels; in short, stored with rare, precious, and wonderful things of the first excellence. To prove this, let us examine the actions of these knights, and the conduct of the fable."

He then proceeds to remark on the conduct of Aladino, King of Jerusalem, who asking advice of a magician, is counselled by him to seize on a miraculous image of the Virgin possessed by the Christians:—

"Advised thus, the king impatient,
Flew in his fury to the house of God—"

"I think I see this king run off like a messenger, without replying a single word, to seize the image, and fancying that he had thus secured his success and relieved himself from all embarrassment. I do not now the character with which the poet designs to endue this king, but if he wishes to represent him foolish and nearly idiotic, he could not better succeed in his intention, as we shall see by many other of his actions."

In Book II. stanza 48, he says to Clorinda:—

"Be you commandress therefore, Princess, Queen
Of all our force—be thy word law."

"And thus he proceeds in his former silly and rash conduct. Scarcely has Clorinda arrived, known to him only by fame, and to whom he had never before spoken, than he gives her absolute command over all his warriors, not considering whether he injured or not his former champions by placing them under the command of a woman. True it is, that any one who would take up the defence of this poet may alledge, that if in this place Aladino gives up his sceptre to Clorinda,

nevertheless, finding out his error in the sequel, he makes no further mention of his concession, as if it had never been made, or as if he had taken it from her again, and thus makes a defect of memory remedy his heedlessness."

The main action of the "Jerusalem" is delayed by the council of the devils, and their machinations against the Christians. Galileo observes:—

"I allow this council of the devils to be excellent; but what displeases me in this hellish enterprise is, to see how ill the result corresponds with so great preparation, in which the whole inhabitants of Pluto's palace put themselves in array to plot against the Christian army, but we do not find that they execute a tenth part that Discord alone accomplishes in Ariosto. Even all the diabolical cunning shewn in dismembering the army of the Faithful of those who follow Armida, would not have sufficed, had not the poet resolved to make his heroes more base and effeminate than the lowest animals.

"The fault of taking a multitude of subjects in hand, and then leaving them imperfect, is so familiar to this author, that we may pardon it with a safe conscience, being a maxim so evident, that he must sin against it not through malice but ignorance. We have Idraotte, 'a wizard grave and sage,' who resolves to have a part in the glory of the intended enterprise against the Christians; to facilitate which, he desires to unite his troops with the Egyptians, and to send his niece to weaken the Christian forces. But after having sent off the damsel, he disappears; nor does he ever more think of war, of the union of the armies, of victory, nor what is worse, of his niece; in short, there is no more mention made of him. I pass over the extreme prudence and honourable design of a king and famous magician, in employing in this manner a noble damsel, his niece, of exquisite beauty, sending her into the midst of an inimical camp, giving her lessons by which she might prostitute herself, and the solemn account she makes of his lessons, things not equalled in the most infamous scenes of real life. And what glory does he expect from his heroic achievements? Oh, noble king! most noble magician! Signor Tasso, I have already told you ten times, this is no business of yours, and as many adventures as you would conduct, of so many follies are you guilty.

"And in the sequel, how credulous and silly does he represent his heroes. Scarcely has Eustazio seen Armida, than he foolishly runs to offer all he can, not only his own sword but the sceptre of Goffredo; from which we can only infer, that he was either a boaster and ranter, or a fool and an idiot.—And then we at length get rid of Madonna Armida, after she has caused this our poet to fill up a hundred and nine stanzas, in recounting how she drew away a few adventurers from the camp. Which I observe for the sake of those who celebrate the brevity of this inexpressibly long-winded author."

But the episode of Armida is treated with gentleness by the critic, in comparison with the history of the love of Tancred for Clorinda, which he pronounces to be the dullest and most insipid thing imaginable. "For this," he says, "is the progress. Tancred suddenly beholds Clorinda, all armed except her face. He does not speak to her, nor she to him; in fact, she is on the point of attacking him, when she suddenly departs, and he remains overcome. After this, he does not

seek to find her, know her, or obtain her, until meeting her another time in battle, he draws her aside under the pretence of fighting with her, when he discovers himself to be in love with her, saying with exquisite felicity, 'Tear out my heart,' and two or three more nonsensical lovelike sayings, to which she neither replies, nor, for aught one can observe, listens. Another time, being about to fight with Argante, he stops to look at her at the distance of about a mile, and at length having killed her, laments desperately over her. Such are the achievements of Tancred, truly worthy of being sung in heroic verse, that the memory of them may not be lost."

This is sufficient severe; but when the critic comes to details, he loses all patience. He quotes Stanza 27, Book VI.—

" He saw not where the Pagan stood and stared,
As if with looks he would his foeman kill,
But full of other thoughts he forward fared,
And sent his looks before him up the hill;
His gesture such his troubled soul declared:
At last as marble rock he standeth still,
Stone cold without, within burnt with Love's flame,
And quite forgot himself, and why he came."

" God give me patience with this man! Ah, thou vile Tancred! Are these thy heroic acts? What! wert thou chosen from among the rest to fight with Argante, and when you meet him, instead of attacking him, you stop to make love! Oh, what a hero! And then what an admirable position he has chosen from which to court his lady. He cannot be nearer than half a mile to her. Argante calls to battle; Tancred listens, and makes a fool of himself; in short, another must needs in pity advance and fight for him. Ah, God! Signor Tasso, are these your heroes? At least if this were a long-lived, reciprocal, and ardent affection. He loved one whom he had scarcely seen, who had never spoken to him, and was even ignorant of his existence, not to mention of his attachment; and yet he distinguishes himself thus advantageously for her sake." And then the angry critic, obliged to admit the merit of the combat between Argante and Tancred, and that the author deserves praises of which he ought not to be defrauded, still detracts from his niggardly allowance, by making a comparison between this and the single combats of Ariosto, preferring the latter to his rival.

Erminia is treated with a little more respect. After laughing at the long sight which permits her to recognize the Christian warriors at the distance of a mile, he continues:—" This episode of Erminia is, in my opinion, defective in many respects. Even omitting the absence of extraordinary events, because we need not seek them in this book,—and we already admit and pardon the defect of making all his fables cold and unattended by any marvellous circumstances;—omitting this, yet it appears to me to fail in decorum and verisimilitude. First, that a damsel should continue to love for so long a time one who had possessed himself of her kingdom, who had killed her father, and was of an adverse faith, if not to herself, at least to all her friends, and what is of greater consequence, without meeting with any reciprocity of affection. And then, not daring to avow her love while under his roof, and even for the preservation of royal honour, which ought never to be despised, having left him, and sheltered herself in Jerusalem with the king—then, I say, after the lapse of much time, without Tancred's re-

ceiving the slightest intimation of her attachment, she must needs fly from a place where she is welcomed and caressed, to go into the midst of the enemy's camp, at the risk of her life, or at least at the risk of being despised and driven away as unworthy;—all this concatenation of circumstances is equally defective in decorum and congruity; and the causing her to remain all day on a tower expecting to distinguish her Tancred among a thousand armed squadrons, is not only incongruous but impossible.”

Now Galileo must here permit me to observe, that if he requires congruity in the actions of one in love, the science of mathematics must have had more power over his mind than I would willingly believe. It is probable that the enamoured Erminia could not distinguish her Tancred in the long array of a large army, yet that she should seek to do so is natural and not unbeautiful. The risk she runs in going to the Christian camp only enhances our idea of this excess of her passion. That she should conceal this misplaced affection while near her prosperous conqueror, and discover it when absence had shed that halo round him which absence ever sheds on one beloved, when she was free, and would appear rather to bestow than accept, when he is wounded and requires her assistance—is, I appeal to all lovers who read these pages, in the true spirit of an unfortunate but passionate attachment. It must be remarked also, that Galileo makes no observation on the flight of Erminia and her arrival on the pastoral banks of the Jordan, which affords a strong presumption that the whole of this lovely passage is faultless. Even the loves of Rinaldo and Armida are honoured with little remark. He is angry with the cavern under water, quarrels with the geography of her palace, and laughs at the idea of a knight with a looking-glass hanging from his arm. But many stanzas are passed over by him, and they are those which are distinguished by the highest poetical talent.

The style of Tasso affords a weedy field of large extent for the operations of the critic, and Galileo does not spare it. His strictures become acrimonious, ironical, and bitter to an extreme. He introduces his observations by saying, that “one of the commonest defects of Tasso, springing from a great narrowness of conception and poverty of ideas, is, that often failing in materials, he is obliged to patch together incongruous imagery, which has neither dependance on nor connexion with its different parts: hence his narration appears more like a picture in mosaic than in oil colours; because mosaic consisting of a joining together of small pieces of wood of various colours, which can never be united so perfectly but that their sides must be apparent, and this distinctness and want of mellowing in the colours necessarily renders the figures hard and crude, without either softness or relief.”

His contempt of the conceits of which Tasso was too fond, is expressed without reserve, and he even dwells on mere verbal criticism. He angrily objects to the indiscriminate use of the word *thing* (*cosa*), which, he observes, is very dear to this poet, and means not only battles, sieges, arms, and armies, but also horses, carriages, machines, boots, boxes, and barrels. The epithet *great* also excites his pointed contempt: “This word serves as a seasoning for all dishes,” he says, “for we have great bodies, great hearts, great power, great horses, great sons—and, above all, a great bull (*gran tauro*)—What can this

gran tauro be? perhaps Monte Tauro—and this same seasoning, if I do not deceive myself, is, in the taste of this poet, fit to constitute a great style.”

Canto III. Stanza 1.—

“ In voce mormorava alta e sonora—”

Murmured with a loud sonorous voice.

“ A loud, sonorous voice, is no murmur, which is a soft, low sound.” (I am obliged in quoting these defects of style to leave the translation of Fairfax, from whom I before quoted. He somewhat ameliorates this verse, saying,

When through the camp a murmur shrill was spread.)

Canto III. Stanza 45.—

“ Dura quiete preme, e ferreo sonno—”

Oppressed by stupor dull, and iron sleep.

“ I think I see this exquisite pedant rejoice and weep with delight on discovering these dearest treasures of his elegant style; feeling a gentle thrill through all his members, even to the roots of his hair, not less than that which a fond mother experiences when she fancies that she sees her son surpass his comrades in song or dance, or any other pretty accomplishment. I wish thee joy of thy “ iron sleep !”

He declaims justly against the speeches of the heroes as pedantic, turgid, and dull. This is the great defect of Tasso. His descriptions are beautiful, and his events, if they are not wonderful, yet are generally natural and pleasing; but his speeches fail, and we may echo Galileo, who says, “ If I had to advise this author, I would counsel him, in gentle brotherhood, to make his people speak as little as possible, and not as he on the contrary does, often causing them to hold forth with the worst grace imaginable.”

These are a few of Galileo's strictures on a poet, whom he sums up as a dull, wretched, and miserable writer. Yet deficient as Tasso was for the task of an Epic poem, he was in the truest and most exclusive sense of the appellation, a poet. He felt, and could utter the sensations of his own heart with vividness and truth; he contemplated the grand theatre of Nature with the restless questioning of a poetic mind, and clothed her with the richest hues that imagination can bestow. He could penetrate the depths of passion, and draws tears of sympathy by the description of the emotions he imagined to be implanted in the hearts of his heroes; and there is often a gentle and rich flow in his language, which reminds one of the smoothness of Virgil, but which is more impassioned; and he feels with deep truth those almost unattainable sensations which lie in the hearts' core, which can be felt only by one overflowing with sensibility, and described alone by the most imaginative of creatures, a poet.

Penetrated as I am by the real beauties of Tasso, I should feel sorry if I had alienated any of his admirers by giving these generally just censures the weight of Galileo's authority. Let them remember, however, that he remarks defects only, and he is chary of all praise; so much so, that any passage is “ more honoured in the breach than in the observance.” If, therefore, any reader shrink from a poem thus severely treated, let him, as an antidote, read in the original, or in Fairfax's translation, the flight of Erminia, the death of Clorinda, or the adven-

tunes of the two knights who seek Rinaldo in the gardens of Armida; nor let him forget to conclude this episode, and, if he be not of iron temperament, he will be moved by the repentance of the enchantress, and her reconciliation with her youthful lover; so he will close the volume almost forgetful of those blemishes, which, although they diminish Tasso's fame as the writer of an Epic, leave him in possession of all that he deserves as the creator of some of the most beautiful imaginations the poetic world contains.

COMMON PLACES.—(*Continued.*)

XLVI.

The Scotch understanding differs from the English, as an Encyclopedia does from a circulating library. An Englishman is contented to pick up a few odds and ends of knowledge; a Scotchman is master of every subject alike. Here each individual has a particular *hobby* and favourite bye-path of his own: in Scotland learning is a common hack, which everyone figures away with, and uses at his pleasure.

XLVII.

A misanthropic writer might be called *the Devil's amanuensis*.

XLVIII.

To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is the most enviable distinction of humanity. There is all the pride and sense of independence, irritated and strengthened by being proscribed by power, and liable to be harassed by petty, daily insults from every, the meanest vassal. What a situation to make the mind recoil from the world upon itself, and to sit and brood in moody grandeur and disdain of soul over fallen splendours and present indignities! It is just the life I should like to have led.—

XLIX.

The tone of good company is marked by the absence of personalities. Among well-informed persons, there are plenty of topics to discuss, without giving pain to any one present—without submitting to act the part of a *butt*, or of that still poorer creature, the wag that plays upon him.

L.

Londoners complain of the dullness of the country, and country people feel equally uncomfortable and at a loss what to do with themselves in town. The fault is neither in the town nor in the country—every one is naturally unsettled and dissatisfied without his usual resources and occupations, let them be *what* or *where* they may.

LI.

Each rank in society despises that which is a step below it, and the highest looks down upon them all. To get rid of the impertinence of artificial pretensions, we resort to nature at last. Kings, for this reason, are fond of low company; and lords marry actresses and barmaids. The Duke of York (not the present, but the late King's brother) was at a ball at Plymouth. He danced with a Miss Byron, a very pretty girl, daughter of the Admiral of that name, and aunt to our poet. But there was a Mrs. Fanning present, who was a paragon of beauty. The Duke asked, "Who is she?" "A baker's daughter,"

was the answer. "I don't mean that; but what is she now?" "A broker's wife." The lady did not perceive, that to a Prince of the Blood there was little difference between a tradesman's wife and the daughter of a naval officer; but that the handsomest woman at a ball was an object of admiration in spite of circumstances.

LII.

It has been asked, whether Lord Byron is a writer likely to live? Perhaps not: he has intensity of power, but wants distinctive character. In my opinion, Mr. Wordsworth is the only poet of the present day that is likely to live—*should he ever happen to be born!* But who will be the midwife to bring his works to light? It is a question whether Milton would have become popular without the help of Addison; nay, it is a question whether he is so, even with it.

LIII.

An anecdote is told of General Wolfe*, that he was out with a party of friends in a boat, the day before the battle of Quebec. It was a beautiful summer's evening, and the conversation turned to Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, which was just then published. Wolfe repeated the lines, "For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey," &c. with enthusiasm, and said, "I would rather be the author of those lines than beat the French to-morrow! He did beat the French, and was himself killed the next day. Perhaps it was better to be capable of uttering a sentiment like this, than to gain a battle or write a poem.

* See Mackenzie's Life of Home, the author of Douglas.

TO THE EVENING STAR.

(From the Greek of Bion *.)

O Hesper, golden light of gentle love!
 Dear sacred glory of the azure night!
 Thy brilliance shines all other stars above
 Far as it yields to Cynthia's stronger light.
 Be blest, bright star! and to my shepherd swain,
 As o'er the glimm'ring moor alone I go,
 'Stead of the moon, now sunk beneath the main,
 Yield me thy cheerful light; believe me, too,
 I seek no evil, I would injure none,
 I wish to love, and be beloved, alone.

September 28.

B. PERCY.

* Heinsius attributes the trifle to Moschus.

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